

ACUTABOVE

GREEN INDUSTRY MAINTENANCE LEADERS » BY DAN JACOBS

From the time he was 14 years old, it was pretty evident that **Dean Carpenter** was going to be an entrepreneur. The teen opened a body shop in his parents' garage. He now owns and operates Houston Landscapes Unlimited (HLU), which offers a variety of services, including landscape and irrigation installation and maintenance, as well as beautification management.



TOPTRENDS

» **Precious resources.** "Everyone has heard this quotation: 'Water is life.' In our industry, this is our No. 1 resource. Most professional landscape firms have been working on setting new goals and procedures to conserve water by installing state-of-the-art water management, weather stations, controllers, drip systems and smart sensors."

» **Going green.** "We've stepped up our use of organics in the commercial sector. Real estate developers want the green approach to their developments. The concept of being 'green' means more than just healthy turf and ornamentals; green means using safe products that help promote a natural, sustainable environment."

» **Sustainability.** "Our industry's ability to balance human needs with protecting the environment for the present and the future sustainability is not based on just using green products; it is also taking into consideration what each of us is consuming with our daily living — our footprint. Every responsible company in our industry will need to establish its own sustainability policy."

TOP OBSTACLES

» **Knowledge workers.** "Our industry has been built on hard, backbreaking work and manual labor with the current trends. We are in desire of workers who still have a great work ethic, but also have horticulture, science, microbiology, computers, mathematical and analytical skills — as well as the ability to manage a new age work force."

» **Price vs. quality.** "We have to educate the consumer on the importance of doing the job right, with the correct amount

INSIDE INFO

Company: Houston Landscapes Unlimited

Headquarters: Sugar Land, TX

Year founded: 1983

Employees: 150 full-time

Annual revenue: \$10 million (and growing)

Web site: www.houstonlandscapes.com

Keys to being a maintenance leader:

1. "Take care of your customer, or someone else will."
2. "The customer is always right."
3. "Success is in the details."
4. "Take care of your employees so they will take care of your customers."
5. "If it is not correct, redo it."
6. "Keep learning; reinvent as needed."
7. "Always give more than the customer expects."
8. "Communication is the bridge to success."
9. "Have fun; laugh at yourself."
10. "Be creative. Remember, you are artists using the paints of nature."

of products and correct amount of man and equipment hours. Too many times, the consumer wants the best price. Brand X company may not have any intentions of providing the correct products. Type-A companies are to remain proactive and successful. You get what you pay for."

» **Changing climates.** "We are all seeing the weather changing in our markets. In Houston last year, it felt like we were in the desert heat, and we had very little rain. This year, the Northeast got record snowfall. Global warming is having an effect on our industry. We will have to plan for the worst weather conditions, but hope for the best."

TOP OPPORTUNITIES

» **Smart water tech.** "The trend toward smarter water management is key. We hire the smartest water auditors we can find."

» **Organics for health.** "More and more customers are asking about organic programs. Smart contractors will start an organic program in their communities."

» **Sustainability for tomorrow.** "Maintaining a healthy environment is important for our neighbors and ourselves. It doesn't have to be a full-fledged program at the outset. Start off small and be a leader in your area."

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